

The Diachronic Puzzle of Georgian NP-Clitics

Old Georgian (5th–11th c.) noun phrases display four post-nominal elements usually analysed in isolation: (1) definite clitics =igi/=ese (2) indefinite clitic =me on wh-stems and post-posed numeral erti ‘one’ (3) additive/focus clitic =tsa (>-ts) (4) case-copying Suffixaufnahme. By Middle Georgian the article disappears, =tsa re-hosts to the DP-edge, and Suffixaufnahme wanes, whereas -me and post-posed erti survive. The goal is to derive placement, scope, and diachronic shift for all four phenomena with a single minimalist-syntax + DM model.

Examples

1. *sakhl* *igi* (as opposed to ‘*sakhli*’ in Modern Georgian)
house the
‘the house’ (Adishi Gospels)
2. *ra* *=me*
what =indefinite clitic
‘something’ (Sinai Psalter)
3. *k’ats* *=i* *erti* (as opposed to ‘*erti katsi*’ in Modern Georgian)
man ABS one
‘a certain man’ (Martyr Acts)
4. *srosan* *-ni* *vel* *-isa* *ni* (as opposed to ‘*velis shroshaneb’i* in Modern Georgian)
lilies pl field gen pl
‘the lilies of the field’ (Mt 6:28)
5. *didi* *=tsa* *k’atsi* (as opposed to ‘*didi katsi=ts*’ in Modern Georgian)
big =too man
‘the big man also’ (Adishi Gospels)

Analysis

D° bears [DEF] or [INDEF] plus unvalued φ /case; Foc° bears [+ADD]. Modifiers Agree upward for case, yielding Suffixaufnahme when PF retains the copy. No XP-movement is assumed; syntax halts once features are valued.

After Spell-Out two rules apply, following Halle & Marantz 1993; Embick & Noyer 2001; Halpern 1995:

- 1) Vocabulary Insertion assigns exponents.
- 2) Prosodic Inversion re-hosts any [+clitic] exponent to the first Prosodic Word of its domain.

Sample Structure

(DP (NP (N saxli-sa)) (D [DEF]))

Linearisation: NP < D

VI rules:

√HOUSE ⇔ saxli

sa- ⇔ sa- (locative/nominalizer)

[DEF] ⇔ =igi / =ese

Diachronic Shifts

- Article loss: in Middle Georgian the VI entry for [DEF] loses [+clitic], so Prosodic Inversion no longer targets D; NP-D order surfaces as saxli (no article).
- Host flip of =tsa: the same Prosodic Inversion parameter changes from LEFT to RIGHT attachment, moving the additive clitic from adjective-host to noun-host (Old didi=tsa k'ats-i → Modern didi k'ats-i=ts).
- Suffixaufnahme reduction: optional PF deletion of the copied case ending after Concord; attested variation vel-isa-n-i (full) ~ vel-isa (reduced).

6. Hybrid Minimalism + DM

The analysis is couched in the Minimalist Program for narrow syntax but adopts DM's post-syntactic component: morphemes receive phonological content only at PF by Vocabulary Insertion. Thus syntax contributes hierarchical scope, while PF operations (Inversion, Copy-Delete) determine surface host.

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